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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 000468

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SE GRATION, S/USSES, AF A A/S CARTER, AF/E  
NSC FOR MGAVIN AND HUDSON  
ADDIS ABABA ALSO FOR USAU  
DEPT PLS PASS USAID FOR AFR/SUDAN

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [KPKO](#) [SOCI](#) [ASEC](#) [AU](#) [UNSC](#) [SU](#)

SUBJECT: SE GRATION VISIT BEGINS: MFA'S SIDDIQ SAYS "WE ARE  
READY TO WORK WITH YOU"

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Alberto M. Fernandez for Reasons 1.4(b)  
) and (d)

11. (C) SUMMARY: The President's Special Envoy to Sudan General Scott Gration began his visit to Sudan with a meeting the morning of April 2 at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with Undersecretary (and NCP insider) Muttriff Siddiq. Siddiq expressed the Government of Sudan's willingness to improve U.S.-Sudan relations, but on the subject of the NGO expulsions cautioned that there are limits to what the GoS would and could do. The Special Envoy made clear that he needs a solution on the NGO and humanitarian issue in order to move forward on other political and bilateral issues, but welcomed the Government of Sudan's expressed desire to improve bilateral ties. END SUMMARY.

12. (C) Meeting with SE Gration, USSES Tim Shortley, CDA Fernandez, and emboffs April 2 in Khartoum, Siddiq gushed about the Government of Sudan's willingness to "open a new chapter" in U.S.-Sudan relations. "Since the beginning of the new (Obama) administration, we have been optimistic and hopeful for change between our two countries," said Siddiq, continuing "I hope we can join together to solve Darfur." Acknowledging that there are "many groups" in the United States who look to vilify Sudan, he urged the Special Envoy to be "free from influences" as he began his tenure, "listening to all parties with an open ear." Concluding his opening remarks, Siddiq said "we are ready to work with you hand-in-hand, not in some far-off time, but now... this is a golden opportunity to succeed and achieve an early success for the U.S. Administration."

13. (C) The Special Envoy welcomed Siddiq's introduction, expressing that he valued the GoS's support in examining as many perspectives as possible throughout his visit. However, the Special Envoy also stressed the importance of working out an immediate solution for the looming humanitarian crisis in Darfur following last month's expulsion and dissolution of NGOs. SE Gration pointed out that if the Sudanese can offer a solution on the NGO expulsion issue, the GoS and the USG may have the opportunity to move forward on other longer-term bilateral issues. Siddiq agreed that this is necessary, but as a matter of semantics requested that the SE view the situation "not as an NGO issue," but, rather, "a humanitarian gap" that needs to be resolved. He urged the Special Envoy to use the next week to "figure out remedies" and that Sudan would be "up to the challenge" to meet the needs of the people in Darfur. He also claimed that "more than 10" American NGOs are still operating in Darfur, to which the CDA

noted "but you kicked out the biggest ones." Relenting, Siddiq acknowledged "crisis is not in either of our interests."

14. (C) Siddiq requested that when the Special Envoy is ready to address the larger issues in Darfur, that the U.S. and Sudan address not just the manifestations of the crisis in Darfur, but the root causes. "We must find a political settlement, not just focus on the humanitarian concerns." SE Gration replied that if we can solve the humanitarian issues, we will be able to move on to the larger political issues.

15. (C) Moving on to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, Siddiq requested that the U.S. should focus not just on the referendum but also on "the possibility of unity." Alluding to the SPLM's preemptive visit to Washington this week, Siddiq said "you will hear complaints," adding that the NCP "accepts blame as the governing party as the big brother" in the Government of National Unity coalition, but requested that the NCP also be given credit for progress that has been made. Pontificating the need for a strong central government in Sudan, he claimed that "if we are soft on Darfur, maybe Kordofan, the East, or the North (of Sudan) will revolt."

16. (C) COMMENT: Siddiq's welcome to the Special Envoy was overwhelmingly positive and was choreographed carefully to demonstrate the NCP's strong desire to improve relations with the U.S. While there is clearly a need for the Government of Sudan to save face over the NGO expulsion issue, Siddiq hinted that there is the possibility of some sort of compromise that would be amenable to the U.S. and Sudan. Meetings with other senior NCP officials later in the day

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(septels) supported this early assessment, one which needs to be put to the test. SE Gration will continue to explore solutions to the NGO expulsion and resulting humanitarian gap in further meetings with the NCP, the UN, and others during his first visit to Sudan. END COMMENT.  
FERNANDEZ